

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For NPS use only

received

date entered

SEP 16 1983

1. Name

historic Wood, John Howland, House

and/or common

2. Location

street & number No. 1 Copano Bay Street

N/A not for publication

city, town Bayside

N/A vicinity of

~~congressional district~~

state Texas

code 048

county Refugio

code 391

3. Classification

Category

☐ district

☒ building(s)

☐ structure

☐ site

☐ object

Ownership

☐ public

☒ private

☐ both

Public Acquisition

☐ N/A in process

☐ being considered

Status

☒ occupied

☐ unoccupied

☐ work in progress

Accessible

☒ yes: restricted

☐ yes: unrestricted

☐ no

Present Use

☒ agriculture

☐ commercial

☐ educational

☐ entertainment

☐ government

☐ industrial

☐ military

☐ museum

☐ park

☒ private residence

☐ religious

☐ scientific

☐ transportation

☐ other:

4. Owner of Property

name Michael M. Selzer

street & number P.O. Box 223

city, town Bayside

N/A vicinity of

state Texas 78377

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Refugio County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Refugio

state Texas 78377

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Historic Sites Inventory

has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date July 1983

☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☒ local

depository for survey records Texas Historical Commission

city, town Austin

state Texas

7. Description

Condition

☒ excellent 432 ☐ deteriorated
☐ good ☐ ruins
☒ fair ☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☒ original site
☐ moved date N/A

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Rich, exuberant detailing in the High Victorian Italianate style complements the Greek Revival massing and design of the John Howland Wood mansion in Bayside to make a dignified, impressive structure. The residence towers above the surrounding small community and enjoys a spectacular view overlooking Copano Bay. It is easily the most impressive structure in Bayside. The house and its surrounding property occupy an entire city block within a residential area of modestly scaled dwellings. With its historic fabric largely intact, the structure is currently undergoing restoration.

The Wood House is a large, two-story weatherboarded structure, with a rectangular, Greek Revival plan and rear ell. The main block of the house has a wood-shingled hip roof broken by two interior chimneys and surmounted by a balustraded deck. The house rests on a shellcrete foundation, parts of which may pre-date the 1875 structure.

The main, or southeast, facade faces Copano Bay and is divided into five bays. It is dominated by a two-tiered, full-height, projecting portico with three bays and enclosing galleries. The portico is supported by four pairs of engaged, octagonal, chamfered wooden columns on square plinths carrying ornamented entablature, cornice, and pediment. These Italianate columns carry simple, Tuscan-inspired capitals. Within the central bay of the portico at the ground level is a frontispiece entrance framed with paneled pilasters and entablature. The front door is surrounded by rectangular transom and sidelights. At the second level, a similar frontispiece exists as well, but without triangular pediment.

Second in importance only to the classical portico is the exuberant Italianate detailing on the exterior of the structure. A pendant-bracketed cornice with dentiled architrave wraps the structure and unifies all facades. The same detailing appears also on the balustraded roof deck, within the pediment of the portico, and again on window hoods of the main facade.

Fenestration is symmetrical, paired on the southeast, southwest, and northeast faces, and consists of double-hung sashes. All windows contain six-over-six lights except those of the main facade. There six-over-six lights occur in the outermost bays, whereas the innermost windows contain six-over-nine. Ground-floor windows on the main facade are trimmed with triangular pediments, brackets, and dentiled cornices. Windows on the second level carry a cornice trim.

On the southwest facade of the rear ell there exists a two-story, galleried porch supported by square, wood columns resting on block bases. The porch contains an exterior, open, string staircase leading from the ground floor to the attic and is additionally defined by an exuberant, stylized, scroll-cut baluster rail.

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National Park Service**

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With approximately 6500-7000 square feet, the interior of the Wood House is conventionally Greek Revival in plan. The rectangular main block is divided by a central hall with two rooms on each side. The rear ell at one time was three rooms deep, but the first two rooms on the ground floor have been combined. Architraves surrounding the doors are Greek Revival in design, while windows are framed with architrave trim. The doors are plain-form paneled doors, although the upper panels of the two doors toward the front of the hall are roundheaded. Transoms surmount these doors. Some Italianate influence may be seen in the staircase, such as the tapered, octagonally-shaped and heavily-turned newel post. Like the exterior staircase, the single-flight interior staircase is open string, has turned balusters echoing the exterior south and west galleries and roof deck, and applied, ornamental brackets. Interior walls, floors, and ceilings are all of unfinished planks. Cornices are simple while mantels reflect both Greek Revival and Italianate traditions.

The basic structure of the 1875 house appears to be intact. Fenestration does not seem to have been altered noticeably, and the few changes made in room arrangements seem to have been more additions than subtractions. The wall and fireplace once separating the two main rooms of the rear ell are gone, but otherwise the addition of bathrooms is the most visible change made to the historic plan.

The house seems to be in a fair state of repair. The current owner has recently replaced decayed timbers on the side porches and is gradually repairing the front porch, where all but a second-story middle section of the balustraded gallery is missing. The entire downstairs interior has been sandblasted, and exposed horizontal planks appear fairly uniform in size and color. Hardware in the structure dates from several time periods, and there do not seem to be any early light fixtures. No early outbuildings are apparent, although shellcrete foundations have been located west of the house.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates ca. 1875

Builder/Architect Contractors: Viggo Kohler, Hugo Heldefels

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The imposing scale and stately proportions of John Howland Wood's mansion in Bayside mark it as an impressive residence for any location in Texas. But on the Texas coast, where few mansions were built, it exists as a rare phenomenon. The Wood House is also of interest as one of the most substantial and least-altered country mansions of the post-Civil War era in Texas. The 1875 Wood residence is essentially a Greek Revival house with significant Victorian Italianate detailing. Yet it represents a mainstream, if conservative, expression of architectural styles for its time. The Wood House is a grand and tasteful symbol of the social and economic prestige achieved by its owner, Major John Wood, who was pioneer, patriot, entrepreneur and head of one of the most influential families to settle the Coastal Bend of Texas.

John Howland Wood, born in 1816 in Dutchess County, New York, to Humphrey and Maria de Contillion, emigrated to Texas at age 20. He arrived via the Matawomkeg at Velasco early in 1836 with the New York Battalion. This group of soldiers had been organized by Edwin Stanley and Edwin Morehouse to aid Texians in their fight for independence from Mexico. Wood fought in the decisive Battle of San Jacinto, on April 21, 1836. He also supervised the burial of James W. Fannin's men after their massacre at Goliad, and served under T.J. Rusk whose army followed Vincente Filisola's retreat to Mexico, according to the terms of surrender drawn up at San Jacinto.

After the revolution, Wood became Quartermaster of the Texas Army at Victoria. Simultaneously he set up his first ranching operation with headquarters at present-day Edna. By 1845, Wood was running enough cattle to enter into contract to supply beef to the U.S. Army under General Zachary Taylor.

In 1849, John and Nancy Clark Wood purchased the 144-acre holdings of Peter Doren near Black Point (later St. Mary's), present-day Bayside, and moved there with their young family. Black Point commanded a spectacular view overlooking the Copano Bay. Named "Bonnie View" by Nancy Wood, this site became the headquarters of the Bonnie View Ranch where Major Wood would later build the present house.

From Bonnie View, Wood managed his various and profitable land and cattle partnerships. He eventually became one of the most successful cattlemen in Texas, with family holdings of over one million acres spread throughout 10 South Texas counties. In the year 1885, Wood was listed as one of the largest property owners in Victoria County. Wood's principal partnership was the Wood-Driscoll Land and Cattle Company with brothers Robert and Jeremiah Driscoll. In 1857, Wood also became a partner with Joseph F. Smith, a nephew of Provisional Governor Henry Smith, who had platted St. Mary's in 1839, and through whom Wood had acquired the Bonnie View ranch in 1849. With Wood's financial backing, Smith developed St. Mary's. Wood owned a large mercantile store in St. Mary's,

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National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
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date entered

Continuation sheet

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Page 1

later named John Wood and Sons, and owned and operated the St. Mary's wharf. Wood also is reported to have promoted St. Mary's as a port facility. When The Vaquero was established as the first newspaper in Refugio County, it was printed in Wood's store in St. Mary's.

After the Civil War and service as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Confederate Coast Guard, Wood, with partner Smith, extended his development interests in a new direction. In 1868, he purchased 640 acres of land where he and Smith established the town of Rockport. Wood and Smith together with T.H. Mathis, J.M. Mathis, and J.M. Doughty, other individuals who figured prominently in South Texas civic and political affairs, are credited with being the founding fathers of Rockport. In 1871, Wood, J.M. Mathis, and T. O'Connor incorporated the Rockport, Fulton, Laredo, and Mexican Pacific Railroad Company. Also during this era, Wood served many terms as a member of the commissioner's court in Refugio County.

When Wood moved his family to Black Point in 1849, it is unclear whether they moved into an existing house built in 1839 by Peter Doren and possibly enlarged by Wood, or whether the Major razed the Doren house and built a new one-and-a-half-story timber structure with lime, shell, and concrete foundation. In either case, the structure was surrounded by a palisade of oak logs which eventually enclosed concrete barns, silos, and underground rain water cisterns as well. This compound served as the Bonnie View Ranch headquarters for 20 years.

About the year 1870, the house was struck by lightning and heavily damaged. In 1875-77, Wood began building his new Greek Revival-Italianate mansion at the same location, again taking advantage of the view of Copano Bay. Family tradition holds that Wood incorporated into the new house the original shell and concrete foundation, supports, trusses, uprights, and certain of the original rooms from the 1849 structure. Although no evidence of the original 1849 rooms can be seen in the standard Greek Revival floor plan of the mansion, cut blocks from the older foundation may well form part of the mansion's present foundation. Wood commissioned local contractors Viggo Kohler and Hugo Heldefels to build the structure of longleaf pine shipped to St. Mary's from Florida. The house is reported to have been strongly reinforced to withstand the ravages of coastal storms. The Wood residence bears a strong resemblance to the homes of fellow cattle barons John G. Kenedy in Corpus Christi (demolished 1952) and Thomas M. Mathis in Rockport (National Register, 1971). In a part of the state with few surviving Greek Revival residences, the Wood and Mathis houses are unquestionably among the most significant.

Wood lived continuously in the massive residence from 1877 until 1900, when he moved to Rockport. Shortly before his death in 1903, Wood divided his estate and sold Bonnie View to his son Tobias Wood. In 1906 Tobias sold the ranch and house to the Johnson and Pugh Development Company of Danville, Illinois. They, in turn, sold the ranch to Burton and Danforth for subdivision into 100-acre farm lots, with the mansion being raffled as a promotional venture to Phillip Cook. Cook later converted the residence to a sea-side resort. It served as a hotel for more than 50 years. In 1976, Michael M. Selzer purchased the old home for use as his residence. He is gradually restoring it.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Brown, John Henry. Indian Wars and Pioneers of Texas. St. Louis Missouri, 1896.

Corpus Christi Times, "Strange Things Heard of Old Mansion," October 19, 1979.

10. Geographical Data

Acres of nominated property ca. 2 acres

Quadrangle name Bayside, Texas

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

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6	7	5	6	2	0
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3	1	0	8	5	3	0
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Zone Easting Northing

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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Verbal boundary description and justification

All of block A, town of Bayside. Vol. I, p. 5 of Map and Plat Records, Deed recorded in Vol 205, pp. 278-279.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
N/A			

state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Julie Wendler Strong, Consultant

organization N/A

date March 3, 1983

street & number 4105 Duval

telephone (512) 454-0145

city or town Austin

state Texas 78751

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☐ state ☒ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Julie Wendler Strong*

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 9 Sept. 1983

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

**Entered in the
National Register**

date

10/13/83

Delores Byers
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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Hudson, Hobart. Refugio, A Comprehensive History of Refugio County from Aboriginal Times to 1955. Woodboro: The Rooke Foundation, Inc., 1955.

Webb, W. P., and H.B. Carroll. The Handbook of Texas, 2 vols., Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1952.

Wood, Alpha Kennedy. Texas Coastal Bend, People and Places. San Antonio: Naylor Company, 1971.

John Howland Wood House, File on deposit at Texas Historical Commission, Austin.

Wood, Judge John Howland III to Peter Flagg Maxson, interview, 1978.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Wood, John Howland, House
Refugio County
TEXAS

Working No. SEP 16 1983

Fed. Reg. Date: 2-5-85

Date Due: 10/13/83 - 10/31/83

Action: ✓ ACCEPT 10/13/83

Entered in the RETURN

National Register REJECT

Federal Agency: _____

- ☐ resubmission
☐ nomination by person or local government
☐ owner objection
☐ appeal

Substantive Review: ☐ sample ☐ request ☐ appeal ☐ NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

Recom./Criteria _____

Reviewer _____

Discipline _____

Date _____

_____ see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: _____ technical corrections cited below
_____ substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category	Ownership Public Acquisition	Status Accessible	Present Use
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4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☐ no

7. Description

Condition

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated |
| <input type="checkbox"/> good | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fair | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed |

Check one

- ☐ unaltered
☐ altered

Check one

- ☐ original site
☐ moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- ☐ summary paragraph
☐ completeness
☐ clarity
☐ alterations/integrity
☐ dates
☐ boundary selection

8. Significance

Period Areas of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (*in one paragraph*)

- ☐ summary paragraph
- ☐ completeness
- ☐ clarity
- ☐ applicable criteria
- ☐ justification of areas checked
- ☐ relating significance to the resource
- ☐ context
- ☐ relationship of integrity to significance
- ☐ justification of exception
- ☐ other

9. Major Bibliographical References

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

UTM References _____

Verbal boundary description and justification _____

11. Form Prepared By

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

____ national ____ state ____ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title date

13. Other

- ☐ Maps
- ☐ Photographs
- ☐ Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to _____

Signed _____ Date _____ Phone: _____

Comments for any item may be continued on an attached sheet



John Howland Wood House

No. 1 Copano Bay Street, Bayside, Refugio County, Texas

Photo: James Duff Bigger, Jr., January 1983; neg. on
file, Texas Historical Commission, Austin.

Oblique view of front elevation, looking north.

Photo 1 of 14.



John Howland Wood House

No. 1 Copano Bay Street, Bayside, Refugio County, Texas

Photo: James Duff Bigger, Jr., January 1983; neg. on
file, Texas Historical Commission, Austin.

View of main entrance, looking northwest.

Photo 2 of 14.



John Howland Wood House

No. 1 Copano Bay Street, Bayside, Refugio County, Texas

Photo: James Duff Bigger, Jr., January 1983, neg. on
file, Texas Historical Commission, Austin.

View of portico detail, looking northwest.

Photo 3 of 14.



John Howland Wood House

No. 1 Copano Bay Street, Bayside, Refugio County, Texas

Photo: James Duff Bigger, Jr., January 1983; neg. on
file, Texas Historical Commission, Austin.

View of side elevation, main block, looking east.

Photo 4 of 14.



John Howland Wood House

No. 1 Copano Bay Street, Bayside, Refugio County, Texas

Photo: James Duff Bigger, Jr., January 1983; neg. on
file, Texas Historical Commission, Austin.

View of rear ell, side elevation, looking northeast.

Photo 5 of 14



John Howland Wood House

No. 1 Copano Bay Street, Bayside, Refugio County, Texas

Photo: James Duff Bigger, Jr., January 1983; neg. on
file, Texas Historical Commission, Austin.

Northeast elevation, looking west.

Photo 6 of 14.



John Howland Wood House

No. 1 Copano Bay Street, Bayside, Refugio County, Texas

Photo: James Duff Bigger, Jr., January 1983; neg. on
file, Texas Historical Commission, Austin.

Rear or northwest elevation, looking south.

Photo 7 of 14.



John Howland Wood House

No. 1 Copano Bay Street, Bayside, Refugio County, Texas

Photo: James Duff Bigger, Jr., January 1983; neg. on
file, Texas Historical Commission, Austin.

Detail of shellcrete foundation.

Photo 8 of 14.



John Howland Wood House

No. 1 Copano Bay Street, Bayside, Refugio County, Texas

Photo: James Duff Bigger, Jr., January 1983; neg. on
file, Texas Historical Commission, Austin.

Interior view of main entrance door and hall, looking
southeast.

Photo 9 of 14.



John Howland Wood House

No. 1 Copano Bay Street, Bayside, Refugio County, Texas

Photo: James Duff Bigger, Jr., January 1983, neg. on
file, Texas Historical Commission, Austin

Interior view of ground floor window.

Photo 10 of 14.



John Howland Wood House

No. 1 Copano Bay Street, Bayside, Refugio County, Texas

Photo: James Duff Bigger, Jr., January 1983, neg. on
file, Texas Historical Commission, Austin

Staircase, ground floor, front hall, looking northwest

Photo 11 of 14



James Howland Wood House

No. 1 Copano Bay Street, Bayside, Refugio County, Texas

Photo: James Duff Bigger, Jr., January 1983; neg. on
file, Texas Historical Commission, Austin.

Detail of staircase, looking southwest.

Photo 12 of 14.



John Howland Wood House

No. 1 Copano Bay Street, Bayside, Refugio County, Texas

Photo: James Duff Bigger, Jr., January 1983; neg. on
file, Texas Historical Commission, Austin

A ground-floor chimney piece.

Photo 13 Of 14.



John Howland Wood House

No. 1 Copano Bay Street, Bayside, Refugio County, Texas

Photo: James Duff Bigger, Jr., January 1983, neg. on
file, Texas Historical Commission, Austin.

A ground-floor chimney piece.

Photo 14 of 14.

